

3 March 1982
MMB-2002

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report--Swaziland Bureau--February 1982

I. GENERAL

While a few operational details--small things like housing, furniture and a local staff--remain to be worked out before the bureau can become fully functional, it would be hard to fault the scenery, setting and weather in Mbabane. Pleasantly warm temperatures, gentle cool breezes, an idyllic setting of green hills and valleys, good restaurants and sports facilities and little traffic make this a Southern Californian's idea of paradise.

Everyone in the Embassy has been very receptive to the opening of the bureau. The primary concern of the Ambassador, PAO and others has been that the bureau be as open and aboveboard as possible to avoid the floating of any sinister rumors in the small town atmosphere of Mbabane. The opening has already generated press coverage, with a frontpage story in the 13 January TIMES OF SWAZILAND headlined "U.S. To Set Up Listening Post." The story, based on an interview with Embassy Joint Administrative Officer John Steele, reported that the U.S. was establishing a "media monitoring post in Mbabane to cover southern Africa" and noted that "this will be the first of its kind in the entire southern Africa region." The fact that a TIMES OF SWAZILAND reporter attended the August 1981 signing of the agreement between the U.S. and Swaziland on the bureau, the publicity generated by the 13 January story and the need to advertise openly for staff have put the bureau somewhat more in the limelight than is normal in other places. There has been no adverse reaction to the bureau, and none is expected, but it is likely to remain a subject of some curiosity for awhile.

The one cautionary note concerning Mbabane concerns schooling. While there is a good primary school and a secondary school with the reputation of being one of the finest in all of southern Africa, there is a heavy demand for places and classes fill up rapidly. (The primary school has only one class at each grade, and the secondary school two.) The Embassy has some influence in getting children into the schools, but they are by no means

guaranteed placement. The secondary school requires the passing of an entrance test, and even with that it will not accept students in the 11th grade unless they are coming from a British system. The difference in the timing of the school year, which begins in Swaziland in January, also complicates the placement of American children who would normally be arriving in mid-year. There are local Swazi alternatives to the two best schools, but they are not highly regarded, and South African boarding schools also fill up rapidly. Thus, staff assignments in future should be made as early as possible where school-age children are involved so the initial steps can be taken promptly to arrange appropriate schooling.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial

Some 30 translation tests were given during the month to monitorial applicants claiming Afrikaans, French or Portuguese capability. Tentative job offers have been made to three Swazis, two to do Afrikaans and one, with a master's degree from American University, to do French. Firm offers will be made once the bureau's grade scale is determined and salary levels are finalized. Two good Portuguese prospects (both Portuguese nationals) were among the applicants, and offers will be made to them in the near future, since it now appears that there are no likely Swazi prospects for that language. Another 16 Swazi applicants remain to be tested for work in English and occasional work in minor languages such as siSwati, Zulu and Xhosa. There are few reasonable prospects among the group, but the one university in Swaziland graduates its senior class in June, when it is hoped additional applicants might be found.

B. Communications

1. The bureau has taken over the circuit through Pretoria used by the Embassy until last fall, when they switched to the Africone commo system through Maseru. The circuit, which goes by microwave to Pretoria and then by satellite into the [redacted] became operational on 23 February after a 5-day testing period. So far it has worked perfectly and has improved receipt of traffic immensely over the bureau's initial receipt

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of traffic through Embassy commo, when it was taking up to 5-6 days at times to get incoming items.

2. Some 15 teletypist applicants were tested during the month, with one good prospect and two possibles turning up. A few applicants remain to be tested, but the level of typing skills is not very high in the country and it will take some work to get those hired up to speed (not unlike the situation that has prevailed in other countries, such as Jordan).

C. Technical

A total of 16 Swazi applicants were given the standard Engineering Division local technicians test, with two or three achieving very good results. The top applicant has been offered the job as the bureau's local technician, and he will be brought on board in the near future in order to help with the setting up of bureau equipment.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

Position descriptions on all of the bureau's positions were submitted to the Embassy's new FSN classification panel which was set up only recently to handle the classification of all Embassy positions. The panel, consisting of the heads of AID, ICA, Peace Corps and FBIS at post, as well as the Embassy Political/Econ officer representing State and the JAO Director as "executive secretary," will be meeting in the near future to decide on grades for bureau positions. The grades assigned will determine the salaries to be offered to job applicants.

B. Building and Grounds

The bureau is located in a four-bedroom house along a main road in a mostly residential section of Mbabane. Negotiations to purchase the property were begun by the Embassy last November, but with the necessary processing involved locally moving at somewhat slow speed ("Swazi speed" in local parlance), it was not possible until 23 February to take occupancy of the property, and then only on a rental basis pending formal transfer of title from the previous owner.

In the meantime, the "bureau" has been occupying one room in the Embassy formerly used for the unclassified wireroom. Though cramped, use of the area has worked out well since the circuit to Pretoria still terminates there. Steps are in progress to move the circuit to the new bureau house. All of the necessary equipment, which arrived in Swaziland in January and February, has been moved into the house, as well as some borrowed AID furniture to be used until locally procured furniture can be delivered. Hqs Logistics Officer [redacted] will be arriving on 5 March to help bureau engineer [redacted] with equipment installation and wiring, at which point the bureau should become functional.

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IV. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Bureau engineer [redacted] has been named to the Embassy's Board of Survey, a three-member panel set up to review and evaluate information concerning lost, stolen or damaged property involving any of the agencies at post.

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Chief, Swaziland Bureau, FBIS

cc: Chief, Abidjan Bureau